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TRANSLATIONS

LETTER OF COLUMBUS

[Translated for THE MAGAZINE from the *Carta de Indias*, Madrid, 1877.]

Letter of Cristobal Colon to the Catholic Kings, setting forth some observations on the art of Navigation, Granada, February 6, 1502.

Most High and Mighty Kings & Lords :

I desire to be the cause of pleasure and entertainment to your Highnesses, and not of pain and disgust ; but since the pleasure and delight attach to new things of any interest, I shall speak of each in compliance with your commands as they come to my memory ; and assuredly they will not be judged by their carelessness of expression, but by my good intentions and desires, that in all things I may be of service to your Highnesses to state only that which has occurred to myself ; and although my strength fail me and my fatigue overpower me, my will, as the most obliged and indebted of persons, shall not be wanting in my soul.

Navigators and others who trade by sea always have a superior knowledge of particular parts of the world in which they move and have common intercourse, and for this reason each one of them is better informed concerning that which he sees daily than any others who may go thither from year to year ; and for this reason we receive with pleasure the relations which they themselves make of what they have seen and gathered, as certainly we gain most perfect instruction from that which we learn by our own experience.

If we consider the world spherical as many writers have declared it their opinion to be, or science causes us to believe ; otherwise on its authority it must not be supposed that the temperature is equal in any parallel, since its diversity is as great on the sea as on the land.

The sun diffuses its influence and the earth receives it according to the concave surfaces on mountains which are framed in it, and even the ancients have written enough on this subject as Pliny also who says that under the north [see note 1] the temperature is so mild that the people who live there never die except from vexation and disgust with life, and that they suffocate and destroy themselves.

Here in Spain we find a variety of temperature so great that there is no need of testimony from any early age of the world. We see here in Granada the mountains covered with snow all the year around, an evidence of great cold, while at the foot of the same mountain chain are the Alpujarras, where the temperature is always mild without excessive heat or cold ; and as it is in this province, so it is among others in Spain which it would be prolixity to name. I say that on the sea the same thing happens, especially in proximity with the land, and this is better known to those who constantly trade there than to those who trade in other regions.

In the summer, and certainly in Andalusia, every day the sun is high, and the land and sea breezes blow alternately, and that which comes from the west is soft wind and lasts till evening, and in the same manner that this wind holds some time in this region, so other winds blow

in other parts and regions in summer and winter.

Those who constantly go from Cadiz to Naples know already that when they pass the coast of Catalonia what wind they will find there according to the season, and also those who go to the Gulf of Narbonne. Those who wish to go from Cadiz to Naples, if it be winter time, go in sight of the Cape of Creo in Catalonia by the Gulf of Narbonne; there the wind is very troublesome and sometimes vessels must yield and are obliged to run before it as far as Berueria and for this reason they oftener go to Cape Creo to keep close to the wind and reach the shelter of the Pomegas of Marsella, or the Islands of Eros, and never leave the coast until they arrive at their destination. If they have to go from Cadiz to Naples in the summer time, they sail by the coast of Berueria as far as Cerdena or in the same manner as has been said of the other north coast. Some men are designated from their voyages who have so often made them that they know well these routes and the changes of wind which may be expected according to the season of the year in which they are. Commonly to these men is given the name of the greater pilots, as on the land to the commander of an army; so much so that one who knows perfectly the road takes his command to Fontarabia would not know it from here to Liberia. The same upon the sea, some are pilots of Flanders and others of the Levant, and of the country he most frequents.

The trade and travel from Spain to Flanders is greatly prosecuted; and great mariners are engaged in it. In Flanders,

in the month of January, all the ships are despatched to return to their countries and in this month it rarely happens that there is not a stretch of wind either from the northeast or north-northeast. These winds at this time of year do not blow gently, but strong and cold, and are even dangerous: the distances from the land and the character of the earth are the cause which occasion this. These winds are not steady even though the weather may not have this fault; those who sail with them are persons who take their chances, and most often arrive with their hands in their hair. If the easterly breeze fail them and any other wind blow hard, they must make the ports of France or England until another tide allows them to leave those ports.

Sea-faring men are covetous of money and eager to return to their homes, and venture everything without waiting for the weather to settle. As it was in my chamber on another occasion, I shall inform your Highnesses of what is but for the security of this navigation; which should be undertaken when the sun is in Taurus and be abandoned in the heaviest and most dangerous season of the winter. If the winds favor the crossing is very slack, no departure should be made until the voyage seems assured; and this can be best judged of when the sky is very clear and the wind blows from the north star and holds north always rather stiffly. Your Highnesses know well what happened the year ninety-seven, when they suffered so in Burgos from the duration of the severe weather and the wind which followed, to escape which they went to Soria; and all the court having left on Saturday, your Highnesses remained to

leave on Monday, and that to a courier sent to me that night I replied in a written answer which I sent to your Highnesses that day, that the wind would begin to blow the next day, that the fleet ought not to sail, but to hold on until the wind strengthened, and should leave on Monday, and that on Thursday it would be as far as the Island of Huict, and if it did not put in there it would be in Laredo the next Monday or else the science of navigation was lost. This writing of mine, with the desire to await the arrival of the Princess, induced Your Highnesses to change their intentions not to go to Soria and to test the judgment of the sailor; and on Monday a ship appeared off Laredo which did not go into Huict because it holds but few ships [see note 2].

There are many opinions, and there always have been on land and sea, as to the course to be pursued in similar cases, and to-day there are many other discovered islands; and if that route is already known, those who have to trade back and forth there, with the perfection of instruments and construction of ships, will have a better knowledge of the land and winds and seasons most favorable to take advantage of, and have hope for the security of their lives.

May the Holy Trinity defend your Highnesses, for we have desire and need to keep your Highnesses with all their great estates and lordships.

From Granada the sixth of February fifteen hundred and two.

. S .

. S. A. S .

X M Y

: XPO FERENS. /

NOTE 1.—Pone eos montes [Riphaei] ultroque Aquilonem, gens felix (si credimus) quos Hyperboreos appellavere, annoso degit ævo, fabulosis celebrata miraculis. Ibi creduntur esse cardines mundi, extremi que siderum ambitus semestri luce et una die solis aversi: non, ut imperiti dixerent, ab æquinocio verno in autumnum. Semel in anno solstitio oriuntur iis soles, brumaque semel occidunt. Regis aprica, felici temperis, omni afflatu noxio carens. Domus iis nemora lucique et deorum cultus viritum gregatimque discordia ignota et ægritudo omnis. Mors non nisi satietate vitæ, epulatis delibutoque, senio luxu, ex quadam rupe in mare salientibus. Hoc genus sepulture beatissimum.—PLIN., *Hist. Nat.*, lib. IV., cap. XXVI.

NOTE 2.—In January of the year 1497 the Catholic Kings were at Burgos, as is proved by the date of some ordinances which they sent thence, and by the relation of Galinder de Carvajel, which also shows that “in the month of March came the Princess Margurite and wedded with the crown prince Don Juan, el lunes de Cuasimodo, 3 de abril” with great festivity.—(*Carta de Indias*, p. 658.)

THE SIGNATURE OF COLUMBUS XPOFFERENS

[Translated for THE MAGAZINE from the *Cartas de Indias*.
Madrid, 1877.]

Among the signatures of Cristobal Colon hitherto published, as well those by Fray Antonio de Remesal, who was the first to make it known in his *Historia General de las Indias occidentales*, and particularly in chapter 7, “Guatemala,” etc. (lib. iv., chap. ii., page 163), as by Don Martin in his *Coleccion de las viages y Descubrimientos que hicieron por la mar los Españoles*, etc., and by the historian of the Admiral, Washington Irving, there occur important differences which deserve notice. Remesal, not supposing that future ages would take such interest in this subject, printed in the page above mentioned the signature which, accord-

ing to what he says, he had seen in a letter of the discoverer of the New World, without any explanation, and merely "because some curious person might desire to exercise his ingenuity in its interpretation," and also without fixing or giving their true value to certain characteristic details decisive of its authenticity, without explaining its omissions or giving a justification of its punctuation, which he considered as equal in all the initials of the ante-signature, and taking the liberty also of figuring the word representing the name of Cristobal, translating and writing them in this manner

S.

S. A. S.

X. M. A.

Christo ferens.

In the fifteen autograph letters of the great mariner which Navarrete found in the archives of the Lord Duke de Veragua, and in those coming from other quarters, which he printed jointly with them in volumes I. and II. of his *Coleccion*, he said nothing, and Washington Irving was equally silent in regard to the rubric which the discoverer placed on the left side of his signature; omitting likewise one of the stops between which is placed the first S of the two which are in the second line of the initials of the ante-signature, and although that which precedes the S. of the first line in many cases (stops which the Anglo-American writer did not forget to place), and likewise suppressing in it the oblique line, the direction of which is from outside inwardly, which encloses the word FERENS, which Washington Irving showed, although without accompanying it with the corresponding stop. But the most

striking variation, which can alone be ascribed to thoughtlessness on the part of Navarrete, is to be observed in the manner of writing the Xpo, in the abbreviation of which he made use of capital letters, while Irving, more true to the original, only placed the letter X in this class and the po in small letters, and prolonged the upper right stroke of the versal to supply the dark abbreviation sign, as in the letter; the signatures resulting in the following form:

According to Navarrete.	According to Washington Irving.
S.	.S.
S. A. S.	.S. A. S.
X M Y	X M Y
XPO FERENS	X ^{po} FERENS

That the celebrated Spanish Indianographers omitted these particulars there is no doubt, since in some of the fifteen letters found which we have had the pleasure to examine, thanks to the good will of Señor don Cristobal Colon de la Cerda, the present Duke of Veragua, and in which, besides the rubric that precedes the signature in the *fac-simile* B, the two points and rays are clearly seen. But it is difficult to explain a similar error in a person so minutely precise as the author of the "*Coleccion de Viajes*," who asserts that the signatures of Colon written in other ways to be apocryphal, such, for instance, as the one in which the initials X. M. Y. were punctuated, and the Latin I in place of the Greek Y. and those which present separately and not in continuation of the initials the XPO FERENS, as is established in the document, evidently not authentic, discovered in the Library of the Cara de

Corsini at Rome, with the title of *Codicillus more militarii Cristophori Columbi*, upon which is placed *datum Valledoliti 4 Mai, 1506*, and which shows this signature :

.S.
S. A. S.
X. M. I. XPOFERENS.

Besides these peculiarities, we have observed in the Admiral's manner of signature, that only in the olograph writings the complementary rubric of the signature is made use of, and not in those which are wanting in this particular, as any one may satisfy himself who will compare the *fac-similes* A and B (in the *Cartas de Indias*), noting also that in each of these documents he placed the two stops which precede the Xpo FERENS as in the second *fac-simile* B, and in a letter preserved by the General don Eduardo Fernandez San Roman, while in those which the Lord Duke of Veraguas was obliging enough to show us he appears to have omitted it, although this cannot be affirmed with certainty when it concerns documents "much injured by time, the ink obscured or faded out, and the margins creased or torn," as, according to Navarrete (Vol. I., p. 477), were the letters which by his diligence were discovered in the archives of the descendants of the Admiral. Between the one and the other of these autographs it is likewise to be considered that in the familiar letters the sign of abbreviation appears distinctly, and that in those written to the Kings the prolongation of the arm of the X; from which it is to be deduced that the great mariner did not confine himself to any fixed rules as to this stop, as sometimes, also, he

subscribed for the Xpo FERENS by the title of the office he was at the time filling, as may be seen in the document where he treats of the establishment of his family estates, famous from the suit which was pleaded February 22, 1498, which the aforesaid Navarrete gave to light in this manner :

.S.
S.A.S.
X M Y
El Almirante.

Now, in the instruments of August 3, 1499, in the names of the Catholic kings, he made to the trader, Pedro de Salcedo, conceding to him the exclusive privilege for life of cutting hard wood in the Island of Hispaniola, he signed his name in this manner :

.S.
S.A.S.
X M Y
V I R E Y

But ordinarily he signed, as has been shown, with the Xpo FERENS. Of the fifteen autographs mentioned as in the archives of the Duke de Veragua, published by Fernandez Navarrete, "four addressed to his great friend, Fray Don Gaspar Gorricio, monk of the Monastery of Santa Maria de las Cuevas de la Cartuja de Sevilla, and eleven to his son and heir, Don Diego Colon," all are signed in the same manner, except one done in Seville, February 25, 1505 (fifteen months before the death of the Admiral), in which he suppressed the initials, and only signed with capital and small letters, as we make them, in this manner :

Xpo Ferens.



It seems easy to comprehend the significance of these words written "partly in Greek and partly in Latin," as Don Nicolas de Azara wrote from Rome to Don Juan Bautista Muñoz on the 12th of February, 1784.

But is it known what it was if the initials preceded the *Christo Ferens*. Washington Irving says that to read them we must begin by the lower letters, combining them with those above; Juan Bautista Spoterno conjectures that they signify *oh Xristus, Sancte Maria, Josephus, oh Salvame Xristus, Maria, Josephus*; and in the *North American Review* for April, 1827, the substitution of *Jesus* for *Josephus* is suggested. Such a substitution should not, in our judgment, be accepted, because of the redundancy it implies, since *Jesus* and *Christus* are synonymous, and *Josephus* would complete the invocation, now quite common, of *Jesus, Maria, and José*. Were we to share this opinion, we should also substitute *Salve* for *Salvame*.

.S.
 .S. A .S.
 x m y
 : Xpo FERENS. /

EULOGY OF COLUMBUS.

[Translated for THE MAGAZINE.]

Funeral sermon in eulogy of his Excellency, Señor Don Cristoval Colon, Admiral-in-Chief, Vice-Roy, and Governor-General of the West Indies, their discoverer and conqueror, delivered on

occasion of the removal of his remains from the Metropolitan Church of Saint Domingo, to the Cathedral of our Lady of the Conception, at Havana, by Doctor Don José Augustin Caballero, Master of Philosophy in the Royal and Councillor Seminary College of San Carlos and San Ambrosia, on the morning of January 19th, in the year 1796.

To the Most Illustrious Governor of this city of Havana :

Illustrious Sir! If I made the sacrifice of my health and of some of my occupations when I undertook to prepare a funeral eulogium upon the ever-famous Admiral Don Cristoval Colon, now that Your Excellency has deigned to request a copy for publication, I sacrifice all the force of my talents, and lose all my tranquillity of mind. The first sacrifice was an homage cheerfully and justly rendered to my friend Señor Don Diego José Perez Rodrigues, Canon of this cathedral; this second is a polite deference to the most flattering desire and persuasions of Your Excellency. From one and the other I might derive an incontestable right to claim a double indulgence. But when Your Excellency, to the courtesies with which you honored me in your official letter of January 29th following, added the request to print my sermon, no doubt that the world may not be ignorant of the smallest detail of the demonstrations made by Havana in honor of the obsequies of the discoverer of the Americas, Your Excellency felt obliged to tender to me his protection—a condescension which, on the part of Your Excellency, is a simple expression of his generosity, will be to me an honor and an advantage. An honor?—who would not feel it such